

Marian Drew

Australiana

October – November

hous projects

hous projects announces a solo exhibition of acclaimed Australian photographer Marian Drew's series, *Australiana*. A reception to celebrate the artist will be held from 6 to 8 pm, Thursday, October 18, 2007. hous projects would like to thank the Queensland Center for Photography for their assistance in making the exhibition possible.

"No one ever told me grief felt so much like fear." - C.S. Lewis

Roadkill is an accepted daily nuisance of Australian drivers and commercial developers. Cadavers of wombats, possums, marsupials, Tasmanian swamp hens, and rosellas wounded by traffic, power lines, and construction litter curbsides waiting to be mulched back to the earth. The common link in each of their tiny lives is death by man. Marian Drew gathers their corpses from byways and highways and places them in opulent tableaux to demonstrate how man affects nature when he begins building and consuming in the name of progress.

Drew sets her deceased on kitchen tables amidst fruit and fauna in a manner that evokes Renaissance still-life painting. In particular, reference and parallels are found in the vanitas genre, which were constructions by painters to warn of the bouquet of hubris man weaves. The senselessness of death for Drew's subjects is poignant even more so with the realization that these animals will not be consumed as the fish and fowl shown in classic still life. Sport is cruel; careless discard is unforgivable. Rather than bucolic examples of a landowner's fortunes or flexed exertions of man's control over the natural world, Drew's tables are dressed to implicate the disregard humanity has for the wild animal. The warmth of home, sweet home's family gathering to share a meal is tainted when barriers are removed between the beasts and us.

Drew ushers in a slow awakening because her scenes initially are more feast table than allegorical depictions of human destruction. Then sensation yields from awe and whimsy at her painterly, bedazzling lit compositions to a drain from first blush to pallor as you catch the arising stench of death that oozes and lingers in her work. Animals are lifeless, limp, and visceral against fussy, starched tablecloths and patterned dinnerware or exotic, succulent produce. Without these props one can imagine their bodies on cold steel gurneys. From what is laid to spread before us a sense of the alien cannot be denied. The perfection and temporality Drew creates, like Renaissance painters, is a tad too shiny and contrived for the viewer to deny that the constructions are meant to evoke awareness to issue as well as process.

The contrast is startling in its delicacy and beauty; fascinating in its depth and sensation. What should be a comfortable table of indulgence and conversation is fouled up with the stench of just those intentions' affect on the world outside our kitchens and dining rooms. No matter how decorative the setting, the brutality of death is retained. Drew's endeavor is successful because the resplendent table as a symbol of wealth and commerce is drastically altered when tables are literally turned and morph into displays of waste and sacrifice left in the wake of human consumption.

Marian Drew is a native of Australia that has studied post-graduate in Germany and received the DAAD Scholarship there to further her studies. Drew has exhibited extensively and in particular at: Queensland Center for Photography, Australian Center for Contemporary Art, Brisbane City Art Gallery, Kassel University Art Gallery, Institute of Art in Brisbane, Neue Gallery Kassel as well as numerous others. Critical analysis of her work has been received from her work by _____ and a monograph entitled Marian Drew: photographs + video work was published in association with the Queensland Center of Photography. Drew is a member of the the permanent collections of: National Gallery of Australia, Art Gallery of South Australia, Queensland Art Gallery, The Daryl Hewson Collection, and Artbank, Sydney.

